

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 5448

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USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AR, US

SUBJ: 620(A)(3) OF FAA: ARGENTINE VESSELS IN CUBA TRADE

REF: STATE 158867 AND PREVIOUS

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INSTRUCTIONS IN REFTEL I ASKED FOR AN APPOINTMENT WITH MINISTER VIGNES OR UNDER SECRETARY CARASALES. THE MINISTRY NOTIFIED ME THAT I HAVE AN APPOINTMENT WITH CARASALES TODAY.

2. I GO TO THE APPOINTMENT WITH SOME MISGIVINGS. AN INDICATION FROM ELMA TO THE WORKING LEVEL AT THE FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT IT INTENDED HENCEFORTH TO USE CHARTERED VESSELS WAS ONE THING. IT FINESSED THE ISSUE BY AVOIDING ANYTHING SMACKING OF FORMAL DEMANDS ON OUR PART, OR OF GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT ASSURANCES. THE ARGENTINES WERE, IN EFFECT, ALLOWED TO SAVE FACE. ELMA WOULD USE CHARTERED VESSELS AS A MATTER OF CONVENIENCE, NOT BECAUSE A POLICY DECISION HAD BEEN MADE, OR ASKED FOR, OR BECAUSE THE GOA HAD ACCEDED TO DEMANDS FROM THE USG. THE EMBASSY HAD HOPED THAT SINCE THE END RESULT PROMISED TO BE A GOOD ONE FROM OUR STANDPOINT--I.E. TO GET ARGENTINE VESSELS OUT OF THE CUBA TRADE--THIS DEVICE WOULD BE SUFFICIENT TO SATISFY THE INTENT OF OUR LAW, AND AT THE SAME TIME AVOID A POSSIBLE
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CONFRONTATION WITH THE GOA.

3. THE MOMENT I PUT THE MATTER BEFORE VIGNES OR CARASALES IT TAKES ON A NEW AND DIFFERENT CONTEXT. HOWEVER ONE SLICES IT, WE ARE NOW ASKING FOR FORMAL ASSURANCES. CARASALES MUST REFER IT TO VIGNES. VIGNES, IF HE VALUES HIS POLITICAL FUTURE, CANNOT MAKE THIS DECISION ON HIS OWN. TO PROTECT HIS OWN FLANKS--AND, INDEED, AS A MATTER OF CORRECT PROCEDURE--WILL HAVE TO CONSULT WITH THE TOP LEVELS OF OTHER MINISTERIES. THE MATTER MAY EVEN BE TABLED AT A CABINET MEETING. I HAVE LITTLE HOPE THAT A FAVORABLE DECISION WILL SURVIVE THAT KIND OF TOP-LEVEL DISCUSSION AND CLEARANCE PROCESS.

4. FURTHER, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S EFFORTS, AND ELMA'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROBLEM HAVE BEEN BASED ON THE IDEA THAT HENCEFORTH RPT HENCEFORTH ARGENTINE VESSELS WOULD NOT BE SCHEDULED FOR CUBA. IT SEEMS VERY LIKELY THEREFORE, THAT THE ENTRE RIOS, WHICH SAILED PRIOR TO DISCUSSIONS OF THIS MATTER, IS ALREADY SCHEDULED TO LOAD CARGO IN CUBA. YET, ACCORDING TO MY INSTRUCTIONS, I MUST, WHILE ASKING FOR ASSURANCES, INDICATE THAT IF THE ENTRE RIOS LOADS CARGO IN CUBA THE USG MUST INVOKE THE PROVISIONS OF 620(A)(3) DESPITE ANY ASSURANCES THAT MAY BE GIVEN WITH RESPECT TO FUTURE SHIPMENTS. THIS MAY WELL LEAVE THE GOA WITH PRACTICALLY NO INCENTIVES TO COOPERATE WITH US. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, I WOULD HAVE LITTLE EXPECTATION THAT THE GOA WILL GIVE ANY ASSURANCES AT ALL.

5. I WISHED TO REGISTER THESE MISGIVINGS FOR WHAT THEY MAY BE WORTH. I UNDERSTAND THAT THEY MAY ALREADY HAVE BEEN THOUGHT OF AND DISCUSSED FULLY IN WASHINGTON AND THAT DESPITE THEM A HIGH-LEVEL ASSURANCE FROM THE GOA HAS BEEN DEEMED A NECESSARY PREREQUISITE TO A LEGAL DETERMINATION THAT ARGENTINA IS IN COMPLIANCE. HENCE, WE MAY HAVE NO RECOURSE BUT TO ASK FOR THAT ASSURANCE. WE SHALL OF COURSE CARRY OUT THE INSTRUCTIONS WE HAVE BEEN GIVEN AND HOPE TO BRING THIS MATTER TO A SATISFACTORY CONCLUSION. THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, THAT THE PROSPECTS ARE NOT ENCOURAGING. I CAN FORSEE AN EARLY DEMISE OF THE ARMY SECTION OF THE MIL GROUP AS WELL AS A MORE RESERVED ATTITUDE IN THE GOA TOWARD THE EMBASSY.

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